

REMARKS

This application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated July 12, 2006. Claims 1, 2, 6, 7, 15, 16, 26 and 27 are presented for examination, of which Claims 1, 6 and 15 are in independent form. Claims 1, 6 and 15 have been amended to define still more clearly what Applicant regards as his invention. Favorable reconsideration is requested.

The specification has been amended to conform the Summary of Invention section to the amended claims.

Claims 1, 2, 6, 7, 15, 16, 26 and 27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. In particular, the Office Action states that the “input instruction” limitation was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the relevant art that the inventor had possession of the claimed invention. The claims have been carefully reviewed and amended as deemed necessary to ensure that they conform fully to the requirements of Section 112, first paragraph, with special attention to the points raised in paragraph 3 of the Office Action. Specifically, Claim 1 has been amended to replace the input instruction reception means recitation with “determination means for determining whether or not the selected external printing apparatus needs input of user management information.” Applicant submits that this recitation is clearly described in the specification at least on page 16, lines 1-9. Similar amendments have been made to independent Claims 6 and 15. It is believed that the rejection under Section 112, first paragraph, has been obviated, and its withdrawal is therefore respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 2, 6, 7, 15, 16 and 27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,579,126 (Otsuka) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,598,533

(Yokota) and U.S. Patent No. 5,825,854 (Larson et al.).

Claim 26 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Otsuka in view of Yokota and in further view of Larson et al., and in further view of U.S. Patent No. 5,295,181 (Kuo).

As shown above, Applicant has amended independent Claims 1, 6 and 15 in terms that more clearly define what he regards as his invention. Applicant submits that these amended independent claims, together with the remaining claims dependent thereon, are patentably distinct from the cited prior art for at least the following reasons.

Claim 1 is directed to an image reading apparatus, connected to a plurality of external printing apparatuses via a network. The image reading apparatus includes: (1) generation means for reading an image and generating an image signal; (2) selection means for selecting one from the plurality external printing apparatuses; (3) determination means for determining whether or not the selected external printing apparatus needs input of user management information; (4) input control means for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted when the result of the determination indicates affirmative; (5) output means for outputting the inputted user management information to the selected external printing apparatus; (6) reception means for receiving, from the selected external printing apparatus, availability information indicating whether or not the using of the selected external printing apparatus is allowed, wherein the availability information is determined based on the output of the user management information; and (7) transmission control means for controlling transmission such that the generated image signal is transmitted to the selected external printing apparatus, when the availability information indicates affirmative.

Among other notable features of Claim 1 are: (1) determination means for determining whether or not the selected external printing apparatus needs input of user management information; and (2) input control means for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted when the result of the determination indicates affirmative.

Otsuka does not teach or suggest all of these features and, from the Office Action, it is understood that the Examiner does not disagree.

Otsuka relates to a facsimile apparatus which is linked to a local area network including two or more personal computers and operates on the local area network as a facsimile server for transmitting document files. The Otsuka system records the sending history of a user of a facsimile apparatus and only sends password information to the facsimile apparatus and not to a reception station of the document files. In the Otsuka system, there are three types of devices, a source station (one of a plurality of personal computers and/or an external station), a facsimile apparatus, and one of a plurality of reception devices. Otsuka discusses a log-in procedure to start a computer session, where the facsimile apparatus always requests a user to enter a user name and password on a source station, and receives the user name and password from the source station. However, Applicant has found nothing in Otsuka that would teach or suggest “determination means for determining whether or not the selected external printing apparatus needs input of user management information” or “input control means for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted, when the result of the determination indicates affirmative,” as recited in Claim 1.

Neither Yokota, which is cited as teaching to connect a PC to a scanner to form an

image reading apparatus, nor Larsen, which is cited as teaching to connect a plurality of fax machines for printing, is seen to remedy the deficiencies of Otsuka with respect to the determination means and input control means discussed above.

Accordingly, Applicant submits that Claim 1 is patentable over Otsuka, Yokoda and Larsen, whether considered separately or in any permissible combination (if any).

A review of the other art of record has failed to reveal anything which, in Applicant's opinion, would remedy the deficiencies of the art discussed above, as a reference against Claim 1.

Independent Claims 6 and 15 are method and computer readable memory claims, respectively, corresponding to apparatus Claim 1, and are believed to be patentable over the cited art for at least the same reasons as discussed above in connection with Claim 1.

The other claims in this application are each dependent from one or another of the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed patentable for the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual reconsideration of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the present application.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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